

Town Meeting Coordinating Committee
meeting of Friday, September 11, 2009
Bangs Community Center, room 101

Attendance: Peggy Roberts, Nonny Burack (departed 6:07), Harry Brooks (arrived 5:05), Mary Streeter, Carol Gray (arrived 5:12), Rob Crowner; absent: Dorwenda Bynum-Lewis

1. Peggy calls the meeting to order at 4:40pm.
2. Minutes of previous meeting: Mary moves, Nonny seconds to accept the minutes of 9/4/09 with minor formatting adjustments and the committee votes approval 4-0.

3. Precinct meetings: Mary reports that all dates and locations have been finalized with the exception of the location for the Precincts 1, 2, and 3 meeting. There has been some confusion about who has authority to book a reservation at Marks Meadow. If it cannot be there, it will be at Wildwood. Additionally, Mary is still hoping to identify a Precinct 1 host even though it will be a joint meeting with Precincts 2 and 3, where hosts have already been named.

It is agreed that publicizing the meetings in the newspaper is desirable, but there have been problems with cooperation and timing. In order for the schedule to appear in the Amherst Bulletin before the warrant review on October 14, copy would need to be submitted by October 5; however, the warrant itself won't be finalized and signed until that evening, potentially forcing a decision about staging a bus tour to be made prematurely. There is a discussion of proposed zoning articles that would justify a bus tour, though the cost of hiring a bus driver is also a consideration.

4. Budget presentation proposal: Peggy reports that TMCC's proposal for random ordering of municipal budget motions is on the Finance Committee agenda for September 17, while the Select Board will offer a response to TMCC's request for a joint ad hoc study committee after its meeting on September 14. Peggy and Nonny will plan to attend the FC meeting and advocate for further discussion in an ad hoc committee outside of a formal FC meeting. Mary suggests that if an SB rep can also attend that meeting, then perhaps it can serve as an ad hoc committee meeting.

There is a discussion of the town's bleak and uncertain financial outlook. Peggy comments on her sense of the impotence or "distancing" of TMCC in the current political climate, but Nonny counsels not to take the recent history of the committee as necessarily indicative of a new direction.

5. Warrant review planning: The Warrant Review is set for October 14 at the Middle School Auditorium. Peggy proposes starting at 7:30, since this is usually more convenient for people and the warrant will not be very long.

Peggy describes her experience in her recent efforts on behalf of TMCC. There seems to be a reluctance to accommodate the committee's request to sticker the first packet. Instead, the Manager has suggested using the townwide telephone notification system and/or collecting email addresses from Town Meeting and board and committee members. The committee expresses serious reservations about the appropriateness and effectiveness of this proposal. On the issue of stickering, Mary suggests approaching Town Manager/Select Board office staff directly with the committee's intention. Mary calls attention to TMCC's mission statement, which states the committee's responsibility for "organizing" Town Meeting. Nonny observes that since TMCC represents Town Meeting, TMCC should be present when Town Meeting organization is being planned.

Nonny moves, Harry seconds that two members of TMCC be delegated to attend Town Meeting planning meetings. Carol asks that it be confirmed that TMCC is on the email list for these meetings. Mary asks whether a planning calendar similar to one distributed last year has been published; she has received an informal list of dates, but it lacks some of the detail included in the calendar. Peggy is not sure that two representatives will always be appropriate. In response to a question from Rob, it is the consensus of the committee that its objective is to participate in (not just observe) these meetings, and that more than one representative should be authorized, even if not both (or all) attend every meeting. When it is determined that the decision reflected in the motion had already been made and acted upon earlier in the year, the motion is withdrawn as unnecessary. Peggy and/or Mary, as vice-chair, will attend the meetings.

Rob will assist Peggy and members of the League of Women Voters in assembling the agenda and contacting presenters for the Warrant Review.

6. Informational forum: Carol describes the qualifications of potential speakers gleaned from the program of a "Green Communities" forum held recently in eastern Massachusetts. Mary suggests asking the Hitchcock Center for advice. Nonny relays the recommendation of two Pioneer Valley Planning Commission staffers by Pete Westover. Peggy advises concentrating on background information for issues on the horizon for Town Meeting.

7. Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 25, at which time decisions about Town Meeting packets will have to be made. The committee has also discussed producing a photo display at Town Meeting to commemorate Amherst's 250th anniversary, which needs further attention.

8. Stickers: Carol moves, Rob seconds to authorize Mary to spend up to \$30 to produce stickers for the TM packets, provided Kate Seaman has expressed a willingness to accommodate their application. The motion is approved by a vote of 5-0.

9. The meeting is adjourned at 6:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Crowner

Documents distributed at the meeting:

1. agenda
2. draft minutes of September 4, 2009
3. copy of email exchange about forming budget motion study committee
4. draft precinct meeting flyer
5. prototype for TM packet sticker